Intro to 2 Nephi 13

Isaiah’s vision of the effects of wickedness continued from the preceding chapter. For Nephi and his people this would have been a prophetic confirmation of the suffering and degradation they were spared by fleeing Jerusalem. Given that Nephi included these chapters of Isaiah in his record for the benefit of those of our day, we properly see in this description of Judah’s haughtiness, pride, and intoxication with fashion a pattern and warning for the last days.


These pitiful circumstances describe well the condition of Jerusalem’s citizens after the city’s destruction in 587 B.C. The prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to Judah’s fall, recorded it vividly (Jer. 40-42).


2 Nephi 13:1

*What does it mean to “take away…the stay and the staff”?*

Life is supported by bread and water...so that “breaking the staff of bread”...is equivalent to physical destruction.”


“Stay” and “staff”...are the masculine and feminine forms of the same root, *masen* and *masenah*. By using both forms, Isaiah seems to suggest complete destruction....

Removing the staff...from a nation is analogous to suddenly taking away the props or stakes of a tent—the tent collapses shapeless on the ground. “The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water” might be taken literally, since at both the first and second desolations of Jerusalem, the city was besieged and was at the mercy of a devastating famine. Jeremiah records in the seventh century B.C. that “the famine was probably even worse during a second siege in 70 A.D., for the ancient historian Josephus records the story of one woman, gone berserk from the ravages of war and famine, who roasted and ate her own child (*Wars of the Jews*, 6:3).


2 Nephi 13:2, 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of People and Community</th>
<th>Honor and Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mighty man</td>
<td>Political—leaders of nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Men of war</td>
<td>Military leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Judges</td>
<td>Civic</td>
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<td>4. Prophet</td>
<td>Religious</td>
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<td>5. Prudent</td>
<td>Wise men</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Ancient</td>
<td>Senior citizens, grandparents</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Captain of fifty</td>
<td>Military</td>
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<td>8. Honorable men</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9. Counselor</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Cunning artificer</td>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Cunning orator</td>
<td>Artistic orators, politicians</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2 Nephi 13:4

“Babes shall rule over them”

The Hebrew term for "babes" is ta'a luw lim which means "caprice" or a "tyrant." So in other words, they will have rulers that are childish, cruel, weak—where anarchy and mob-rule prevail.


The fulfillment of this prophecy can be seen in the following tabulation of the reign of the seven kings who ruled from the death of Isaiah to the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 589 B.C. (Book of Mormon dating):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Age When Appointed</th>
<th>Years of Reign</th>
<th>Biblical Label of Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manasseh</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 21:1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amon</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 21:19-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Right (2 Kings 22:1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoahaz</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3 mos.</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 23:31-32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiakim</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11 (3 Years as puppet king of Babylon)</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 23:36-37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehoiachin</td>
<td>18 (2 Chr. 36:9 says 8 years)</td>
<td>3 mos. (under Babylon)</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 24:8-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zedekiah</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Evil (2 Kings 24:17-19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that these kings were appointed between the ages of eight and twenty-five, and all but one were labeled “evil” in the Bible.

Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980], 35

In the time of Isaiah, the Lord was about to allow the invading Assyrians to destroy Israel’s material security. The northern ten tribes were indeed conquered and taken away in the middle period of Isaiah’s ministry (ca. 722 B.C.); however, one king of Judah hearkened to the Lord’s warnings through prophet Isaiah. As a result, though the people of Jerusalem suffered considerably during an Assyrian siege, the city was spared for another century, until it fell to the Babylonians.

When all capable leaders are decimated in a crisis, inept leaders take over; and then such moral and political problems develop that potentially capable people are reluctant to take office. Wicked leaders, who oppress their people and fail to defend them, will be held responsible by the Lord.


2 Nephi 13:5

*Relationship between youth and elderly*—

In these days, it may be typical for children to show neither deference nor honor to their elders.

Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, 39

2 Nephi 13:6

*Brother*...*clothing*—

These verses...reemphasize both the social breakdown of the patriarchal order and the extreme physical poverty of the state. That the man mentioned here should “lay hold of his brother in his father’s house” indicates, first of all, that the father has disappeared and left the family in upheaval, for the son (by custom, the eldest) refuses to fulfill the duty that is his by lineage. The cloak [clothing], or simlah, which is the brother’s so-called claim to power, is not a rich robe but is itself a sign of extreme poverty. In other words, the petitioner is saying, “You have at least some sort
of cloak and the provisions necessary for physical sustenance, food and clothing." Without either physical or social “stays,” it is no wonder that the brother declines a position for which he might otherwise be ambitious.


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You know you’re in trouble when simply having clothes makes you a candidate for public office.

John Bytheway, *Isaiah for Airheads*, p. 80

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2 Nephi 13:9

*Countenances—*

Every person who lives in this world wields an influence, whether for good or for evil. It is not what he says alone, it is not alone what he does. It is what he is. Every man, every person radiates what he or she is…It is what we are and what we radiate that affects…people.


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While attending a youth fireside with Elder Richard G. Scott, I noticed five youths scattered among the congregation whose countenances or body language almost screamed that something was spiritually amiss in their lives. After the meeting, when I mentioned the five youths to Elder Scott, he simply replied, “There were eight.” Isaiah prophesied, “Their countenance doth witness against them, and doth declare their sin to be even as Sodom, and they cannot hide it” (2 Nephi 13:9; see also Isaiah 3:9; see also Isaiah 3:9).


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Perhaps you can judge a book by its cover, at least to some degree. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “You will always discover in the first glance of a man, in the outlines of his features something of his mind” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 299). It seems that, over time, one’s behavior eventually shows up on one’s face. Goodness also shows up on one’s face, which is why Alma asked, “Have ye received [the Savior’s] image in your countenances?” (Alma 5:14).

John Bytheway, *Isaiah for Airheads*, p. 80

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Sodom—

What is the reason for Judah’s destruction? She had sinned openly and flagrantly before the eyes of God, just as the Sodomites did when they proclaimed their unnatural lust directly and unabashedly to Lot’s face. (Gen. 19:5.) Also, Judah had degenerated to a condition of sin not unlike Sodom’s (though not as depraved), in that she had perverted sexuality through misusing it in the idolatrous fertility rituals of the Canaanites. Though this was done to insure productivity in the land, Isaiah warns that the wicked participants will reap only destruction.


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There is a plague of fearsome dimensions moving across the world….

The Surgeon General of the United States has forecast an AIDS death toll of 170,000 Americans in just four years. The situation is even more serious in some other areas of the world….

Unfortunately, as in any epidemic, innocent people also become victims….The observance of one clearly understandable and divinely given rule would do more than all else to check this epidemic. That is chastity before marriage and total fidelity after marriage.

Prophets of God have repeatedly taught through the ages that practices of homosexual relations, fornication, and adultery are grievous sins…..We reaffirm those teachings…. Each of us has a choice between right and wrong. But with that choice there inevitably will follow consequences. Those who choose to violate the commandments of God put themselves at great spiritual and physical jeopardy.

The Savior...made reference to the wickedness “in the days of Lot.” (See Luke 17:26-30.) Lot was warned to flee the gross perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah, where immorality, including homosexuality, was the accepted way of life. (See Gen. 19; see also JST, Gen. 19.) The Apostle Paul foresaw these same conditions in the last days: “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves,...without natural affection,...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” (See 2 Tim. 3:1-4; italics added.)

In order to give homosexuality a semblance of legitimacy, this violation of God’s laws is depicted as an “alternative lifestyle” with no moral or legal consequences. Great effort has gone into portraying one’s so-called sexual preference as a civil right, and those who oppose this lifestyle are branded as “homophobic” or “prejudiced.”

In essence, the rights of moral people are trampled upon to accommodate the lifestyles of the immoral minority. Even the Boy Scouts of America, who have long required members to pledge that they will be “morally straight,” have been denied funding, harassed, and sued because the organization has refused to alter its membership and oath requirements.

Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Behold, I Come Quickly: The Last Days and Beyond* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 39-41

2 Nephi 13:9, 11

“They have rewarded evil unto themselves”

Isaiah foresaw that Judah and Jerusalem would be punished by the Lord as a result of their wickedness. In 587 B.C. the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and Judah was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In A.D. 70, 657 years later, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews to various portions of the world. Surely they had, as Isaiah said, “rewarded evil unto themselves” (2 Ne. 13:9).

_Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121 and 122_, [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989], 31

In Isaiah it is written: “...your iniquities have separated between you and your God...” (Isa. 59:2). Again, “...they have rewarded evil unto themselves” (Isa. 3:9).

There are two courses of action to follow when one is bitten by a rattlesnake. One may, in anger, fear or vengefulness, pursue the creature and kill it. Or he may make full haste to get the venom out of his system. If we pursue the latter course we will likely survive, but if we attempt to follow the former, we may not be around long enough to finish it.

Marion D. Hanks, _Ensign_, Jan. 1974, 21

Because of this widespread tolerance toward promiscuity, this world is in grave danger. When evil is decried and forbidden and punished, the world still has a chance. But when toleration for sin increases, the outlook is bleak and Sodom and Gomorrah days are certain to return.

We were in Los Angeles years ago when the news broke of the illicit affair of a certain movie actress, from which she became pregnant. Because of her popularity, it was big news in heavy headlines in every paper in the land. We were not so surprised at her adultery—it was reported to be common in Hollywood as well as in the world generally. But that such dissoluteness should be approved and accepted by society shocked me. The Los Angeles papers took a poll of the people...and almost without exception,...these community members found little fault with her and criticized as “puritanical” and “Victorian” those who disapproved. “Let her live her own life” they said. “And why should we interfere with people’s personal liberties?” In state and nation and across the seas, such toleration for sin is terrifying.

There is no shame. Isaiah again strikes at the sin:...(Isa. 3:9).

That the Church’s stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare....When the sun grows cold and the stars no longer shine, the law of
chastity will still be basic in God’s world and in the Lord’s church. Old values are upheld by the Church not because they are old, but rather because they are right.
Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], 154-155

**2 Nephi 13:10**

Fruit—

In prophetic language, trees often symbolize people, and their good fruits represent good works. The “fruits of righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10; Heb. 12:11) come through the atonement of “Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philip. 1:11). When Isaiah writes that the righteous will “eat the fruit of their doings” (3:10), this may signify that the righteous will enjoy the fruits of the Spirit, which include “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9, 11). Evil trees, however, will bear rotten fruit, which is representative of the works of the wicked. Christ taught, “by their fruits ye shall know them” (3 Ne. 14:16-20).
Parry, Parry & Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, p. 40

**2 Nephi 13:12**

Disrupt family roles—oppression

And so today, the undermining of the home and family is on the increase, with the devil anxiously working to displace the father as the head of the home and create rebellion among the children. The Book of Mormon describes this condition when it states, “And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.” And then these words follow—and consider these words seriously when you think of those political leaders who are promoting birth control and abortion: “O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.” (2 Ne. 13:12).

The Book of Mormon points out how…ancient conspirators were able to fill the judgment seats, usurp power, destroy justice, condemn the righteous, and let the guilty and the wicked go unpunished. Do you see any parallel between this and the present-day decision of our Supreme Court?

President McKay has stated that the Supreme Court is leading this Christian nation down the road to atheism.
Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon Warns America,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 21 May 1968, 5

The term translated “women”…in this context is used as an accusation. Figuratively speaking, as a man is praised for valor, consistency, and intrepid mind, so, the term woman was used as a term of reproach to a cowardly man, “one timid, undecided, or fearful. As used here it refers to one timid, undecided, or fearful of righteous doing.”

Put the father back at the head of the home….The easiest, simplest way to reduce delinquency among the young [is] to put the father back as head of the family.

Far too many families have been denied the leadership and stabilizing influence of a good and devoted father who stands at the side of an able and caring mother in quietly training, gently disciplining, and prayerfully helping the children for whom they are both responsible.

I do not believe that women resent the strong leadership of a man in the home. He becomes the provider, the defender, the counselor, the friend who will listen and give support when needed. Who better than an exemplary father to effectively teach children the value of education, the dead-end nature of street gangs, and the miracle of self-esteem that can change their lives for good?...

I plead with fathers to resume their roles as the head of their homes….That does not carry with it any implication of dictatorship or unrighteous dominion. It confers the mandate to provide for the needs of their families. Those
needs are more than food, clothing, and shelter. Those needs include righteous direction and the teaching, by example as well as precept, of basic principles of honesty, integrity, service, respect for the rights of others, and an understanding that we are accountable, not only to one another but also to God, for that which we do in this life. One writer observed, "It is not impossible that the true revolutionaries of the twenty-first century will be the fathers of decent and civilized children."


Never before have the forces of evil been so blatant, so brazen, so aggressive as they are today. Things we dared not speak about in earlier times are now constantly projected into our living rooms.

Some to whom we have looked as leaders have betrayed us. And their activity is only the tip of the iceberg. In successive layers beneath that tip is a great mass of sleaze and filth, of dissolute and dishonest behavior.

I believe our problems, almost every one, arise out of the homes of the people. If there is to be reformation, if there is to be a change, if there is to be a return to old and sacred values, it must begin in the home. It is here that truth is learned, that integrity is cultivated, that self-discipline is instilled, and that love is nurtured.

The home is under siege. So many families are being destroyed. Where are the fathers who should be presiding in love in those homes?


2 Nephi 13:14

*Vineyard—*

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Judah his pleasant plant.

Isaiah 5:7

"Spoil of the poor"

To spoil the poor means to take forcefully the goods and property of the poor through high taxation, as booty during wartime, or by other means. Social justice for the poor is a constant theme in Isaiah's writings.

Parry, Parry & Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, p. 43

2 Nephi 13:15

There is so much of civil strife and conflict in our society that could be ameliorated by a small touch of mercy. Much of it has reached a point where the Mosaic law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth has been enlarged to require three eyes for one eye and three teeth for one tooth. Many victims, badgered and broken, cry in vain for a touch of kindness.

We see labor strife fraught with violence and untamed accusations. Were there a greater willingness on the part of each side to look with some element of mercy on the problems of the other, most of this could be avoided.

We have recently been reminded that in this land there still persists, notwithstanding the protection of the law, a merciless exploitation of children in certain industries.

And there are still those, not a few, who without compassion grind the faces of the poor. (Isa. 3:15.)

President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Blessed Are the Merciful*, *Ensign (CR)*, May 1990, p.68

One cannot ask God to help a neighbor in distress without feeling motivated to do something oneself toward helping that neighbor. I heard a man of prominence say the other day, "I have amended the language of my prayers. Instead of saying, "Bless the poor and the sick and the needy," I now say, Father, show me how to help the poor and the sick and the needy, and give me resolution to do so."

We must take care of the poor. Said the Lord, "The poor ye have with you always." (See Mark 14:7; John 12:8). There have always been poor and I guess there always will be poor until the Millennium. We must take care of
them….We must not shift the burden that we ought to carry in our own hearts of spreading kindness and love and help to others, to the institution, which at best, is impersonal.

I do not want you to get any idea that I am saying we should not have the welfare program….But I think there is a tendency among us to say, “Oh, the Church will take care of that. I pay my fast offering. Let the Church take care of that.” We need as individuals, I think, to reach down and extend a helping hand without notice, without thanks, without expectation of anything in return.

Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 457-59

2 Nephi 13:16
“Daughters of Zion”

Isaiah, one of the great prophets of early times, saw our day, and he described the conditions that would prevail among the “daughters of Zion” in these latter days [Nephi 13:16-24]. As I sit on the stand in a stake conference and look down over the congregation, I see some of the conditions existing of which Isaiah spoke….The standards expressed by the General Authorities of the Church are that women, as well as men, should dress modestly. They are taught proper deportment and modesty at all times. It is, in my judgment, a sad reflection on the “daughters of Zion” when they dress immodestly. Moreover, this remark pertains to the men as well as to the women.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, 5:172-174

The plural form daughters of Zion is infrequently used in the scriptures (Isa. 3:16-17; 4:4; Song. 3:11; D&C 124:11). Scholars generally agree that the singular expression daughter of Zion refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah (Lam. 1:6-8; 2:8-11; Zech. 9:9; 2 Ne. 8:25). What then is the meaning of plural daughters of Zion? There are several possible interpretations. If the phrase daughter of Zion represents Jerusalem, then perhaps the plural daughters refers to Jerusalem at the time of Isaiah as well as Jerusalem in the last days. The plural daughters of Zion may also refer to ancient Jerusalem (and the Southern Kingdom of Judah) and to Samaria (and the Northern Kingdom of Israel). The phrase may be literal, referring to actual women, or it may point to women as symbols of pride and sin in the last days. Note the women’s clothing described in 3:18-24 and the actual women that seem to be identified in 4:1. This interpretation parallels Isaiah’s condemnation of male pride (2:10-22) and the sick nature of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (1:5-6, 21-23).

Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, Understanding Isaiah, 43

The “daughters of Zion,” representing Israel, strut proudly in their fine clothes and jewels, but eh Lord will smite them with disease and exhibit their shame (vv. 16, 170….18. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery [glory, finery] of their tinkling ornaments [their anklets, bangles], and caulhs [headbands], and round tires like the moon [crescents]; 19. the chains [pendants] and the bracelets, and the mufflers [veils]; 20. the bonnets [headdresses], and the ornaments of the legs [armlets], and the headbands [sashes], and the tablets [perfume boxes], and the ear-rings [amulets]; 21. the rings [signet-rings], and the nose jewels [nose rings]; 22. the changeable suits of apparel [festal robes], and the mantles, and the simples [cloaks], and the crisping pins [purses]; 23. the glasses [polished metal mirrors], and the fine linen, and hoods [women’s turbans], and the veils [wraps]….Zion (so means Isaiah) will now adopt the garb of mourning, sackcloth. She will receive branding, the mark of slavery, instead of beauty....

24....And instead of a girdle, a rent [a rope, i.e., of captives]....And instead of a stomacher [fine robe], a girding of sackcloth;


Sidney B. Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], 182-83
With respect to the women, and more particularly with regard to the manner in which they dress.

Never have I seen such obscene, uncleanly, impure, and suggestive fashions of women’s dress as I see today. Some of them are abominable. I lift my voice against these infamous fashions, and I pray that you who have daughters in Zion will save them, if you can, from following these obscene fashions, that if followed, will destroy the last vestige of true womanly modesty.

While crossing the street the other day, I saw a woman dressed to the height of this ridiculous fashion, and she was trotting along with little, short steps, she couldn’t go any other way, hurrying across the street to catch the car. She got hold of the rail of the car and tried to lift herself up, but her foot would not go up to the step. By this time there was a crowd of men looking on. All of a sudden she stooped down, caught the bottom of her dress and raised it high enough to climb up. Would you like your daughters to expose themselves in such a manner? To do so they must of necessity part with their sense of womanly modesty. God have mercy on our girls, and help them to dress decently!

I suppose I shall incur the censure and displeasure of many in saying these things, but I do not care. In my sight the present day fashions are abominable, suggestive of evil, calculated to arouse base passion and lust, and to engender lasciviousness, in the hearts of those who follow the fashions, and of those who tolerate them. It is infamous, and I hope the daughters of Zion will not descent to these pernicious ways, customs and fashions, for they are demoralizing and damnable in their effect.

Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 7-8

The haughty are defined as those who are proud of self and scornful of others. Wanton is defined as undisciplined, unmanageable, lewd. Mincing is defined as short, feminine steps or as plain speech.

Monte S. Nyman, Great Are the Words of Isaiah [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980] 37

The “tinkling with their feet” may have been made simply by the striking of anklets one upon another, or by bells or other small ornaments attached to the anklets. These anklets were of gold, silver, or iron, according to the taste or means of the wearer, and are still worn by Oriental women. They are sometimes quite heavy, and special pains are taken to strike them together, in order to make a jingle. When they are hollow, as is often the case, the sharp sound is increased. In Egypt and in India some of the anklets have small round bells attached to them, and these bells sometimes have little pebbles in them, which strike like tiny clappers.

James M. Freeman, Manners and Customs of the Bible, [Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1972], 250

“Stretched forth necks”

This expression portrays women who look sideways to see if others notice their beauty as they prance along the way or as they look upwards with high heads in a proud manner. For the children of Israel in all eras, the expression denotes a people who pay idolatrous heed to others rather than to God above.

Parry, Parry, Peterson, Understanding Isaiah, p. 43

2 Nephi 13:17

Scab/uncover their forehead—

These terms reflect the Lord’s judgment on Israel. Baldness is one of God’s judgments on the wicked (Jer. 47:4-5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18), and it may refer to the “humiliating punishment known among the Babylonians” in which the hair of the forehead would be shaved off. In addition, since the Hebrew word for atonement means “covering,” an uncovered head may point to one who has lost some of the privileges of the Atonement.

Ibid, p. 43
Even though costly apparel was and is a physical manifestation, Mae Blanch rightly identifies it as a spiritual dilemma: "When money and possessions become the chief marks of distinction in society, then the pursuit of money becomes the only action worthwhile. And if this pursuit requires the sacrifice of honesty, integrity, compassion, and all other virtues, then so be it, for the love of money is indeed the root of all evil. Thus the wearing of costly apparel involves the soul as much as the body."

Our society may well be as guilty as the wealthy Zoramites of using fashion as “the science of appearances, inspiring us with the desire to seem rather than to be.” In our day the costly apparel syndrome may be identified as one aspect of the modern-day term “conspicuous consumption.” The word conspicuous alludes to the visual side of vanity—the need to be seen, to be recognized. Consumption refers to that which we take in or that which we consume. Conspicuous consumption may be defined as that which we take to ourselves in order to be recognized and approved by others. By its very definition, the person trapped in conspicuous consumption, especially as it applies to “costly apparel,” must be focused on the opinions of others, because what is “in” today may be “out” tomorrow. Vanity then becomes its own punishment, because there is never time to be satisfied—the eyes and opinions of others can turn so quickly to embrace someone else.

For us, the disease that afflicted the Zoramites encompasses more than clothing. It can include cars, houses, boats, diplomas, and anything else that has a foundation where the need for the approval of man carries more weight than the need to be accepted by God. Elder Ezra Taft Benson referred to this problem in general conference more than three decades ago: “Are not many of us status-seekers—measuring the worth of a man by the size of his bank account, his house, his automobile?...This is a sad commentary on a civilization which has given to mankind the greatest achievements and progress ever known. But it is an even sadder commentary on those of us who call ourselves Christians, who thus betray the ideals given to us by the Son of God himself.”

K. Douglas Bassett, *Four Faces of Pride in the Book of Mormon*

On the subject of dress and appearance the same rule holds as for lunch—sufficient covering is necessary, but don’t go beyond that. If you cannot add a cubit to your stature, don’t try to add other splendors to your person that it does not possess: forget the obsession with an impressive appearance that goes with aspiring to the executive lunch ("dressing for success"); simply appear as what you are, and don’t fuss so much about it (Matthew 6:27-30). “Therefore,” he says again, "take not thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matthew 6:31). The Gentiles spend their time going after these things—but you are not Gentiles.

Now comes a most enlightening explanation of the economics of the gospel, the answer to the natural question, How shall we get on in the world if we don’t even think about such things? The injunction “take no thought” must be taken seriously, since it is one of the most oft-repeated in the scriptures, occurring in all the Gospels, in the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. Here the formula “all these things” applies specifically to what we must eat, drink, and wear—food and covering (Matthew 6:32). It occurs three times as an objective clause, and the key word is seek. In the same breath we are told that the Gentiles seek after all these things, but we are definitely not to seek after them. We are to be busy seeking after something else, “the kingdom of God, and his [its] righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). But what about the other things, won’t we need food and clothing too? Of course, they are very important, and you can rest assured that “your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matthew 6:32), and he will provide them. If you have enough faith to trust him (Matthew 6:30) and spend your days seeking what he wants you to seek, he will provide “all these things” as you need them (prostethesetai).

“But seek ye first (proton) the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added” (Matthew 6:33). It has become customary to interpret this as meaning that one should first go on a mission or get a testimony some other way, and then turn to the business of getting ahead in the world. But the word for first, proton, means first in every sense—first and foremost, before all else, in preference to all else, and so on. It usually refers to time, but not in this passage. We are not told to seek first the kingdom and then seek “all these things”; nothing
whatever is said about seeking them except the explicit command not to seek them. There is no idea of a time sequence here: Does one ever stop seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness in this life, or was there ever a time before, during, or after a mission when one did not need food and clothing? We are not to seek them ever, for God supplies them ever.
Hugh Nibley, Approaching Zion, p. 323-233

2 Nephi 13:18

“In that day”
Since Jerusalem has been invaded so many times, it is difficult to identify which destruction best fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy. Since the warning of destruction is prefaced in verse 18 with the phrase “in that day,” Isaiah could be pointing to a fulfillment in the last days. Some students of Jewish history observe parallels in the Nazi Holocaust. Also, it seems that the last verses of Isaiah 3 might even describe the effects of a nuclear holocaust. (Recent statements by the First Presidency indicate an inspired concern about the dangers of nuclear proliferation; see Bruce R. McConkie, CR, Apr. 1979, 133.) Of course, other disasters, such as disease, plague, or famine, could fulfill these conditions in the last days.

2 Nephi 13:18-24

Fashion—
Definitely a conservative society, the Hebrews resisted change in clothing styles—at least among the lower classes. They chose wool as their fabric, which they could produce from the backs of the sheep that they raised….Men, women and children wore long tunics, extending from the neck almost to the ankles. Women and older girls also had long capes that covered their heads and reached to the bottom of their tunics….We know they often wore [girdles or belts] if for no other reason than to provide a place to tuck the bottom of their tunics when working, or to keep their clothing from billowing in a breeze….Much of the time they were [barefoot] both inside and out of their houses. Sometimes they did wear sandals….
Isaiah severely criticized the well-to-do women of Jerusalem for their ostentation….(Isa. 3:18-24).
Here we see, among other things, that like the Assyrians the Judeans wore gold or silver bands around their ankles, bracelets for the wrist, armlets for the upper arm, earrings (crescents), turbans or head bands, veils, fabric of linen, pendants of precious or semi-precious stones, amulets (to ward off evil or as good luck charms), and had their hair elaborately dressed. In addition, they even wore nose rings.
Howard F. Vos, Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999], 295

Bravery of Tinkling Ornaments….Bravery means “display, show, ostentation, and splendour.”….The Hebrew word used by Isaiah has nothing to do with a modern day reference to a “brave” person….The Hebrew term…translated tinkling ornaments has reference to “a band circling the flesh, particularly, an ornament of women loving display.”…

Cauls….A covering of the head worn by women like a net or fine mesh of parallel threads intersecting at right angles worn on the head and probably secured by a headband….

Round Tires Like The Moon….Ornaments worn on the necks of men, women, and even camels. See Judges 8:21, 26….The reason for the King James use of the word “tires” comes from the fact that originally that word “tyre” meant “an ornamentation, dress, or apparel.” The word “attire” comes of the same origin and the modern reference to an automobile tire, etc., comes from the original sense that the tire was the “attire”, “clothing”, or covering of the wheel.

Chains…..The usual English understanding of this word describes a type of earring, especially when made with pearls or drops….
Bracelets….This term comes from the root word “to twist or to twine,” from the idea of “turning, twisting, or going in a circle or being wreathed.” This particular word is the feminine plural form and, hence, bracelets.…

Mufflers….“A woman’s veil.”…

Bonnets….An ornamental head covering and the term was used in Exodus 39:28 to describe the linen cap worn by the sons of Aaron as part of the priestly robes worn in the Temple.

Ornaments of The Legs….This may refer to a stepping chain which was worn by women fastened to the ankle band of each leg so that the wearer was forced to walk elegantly with short steps. Bells were often attached to this chain to make a sound.…

Head-bands….It has nothing to do with a band or anything else worn about the head. It is a good example of how reading an ancient language translated into old English may be misleading. The term in Hebrew meant “a band or sash worn around the waist.”…

As to the meaning of the term “head-band” in English, in 1611 when the King James translation was made one definition meant “a sash at the top of or head of the trousers.”

Tablets….As to the origin of the English word “tablet” the King James translators may have used that word to designate “an ornament of precious metal or jewelry of a flat form, worn about the person.”…

Others translators have interpreted the terms to refer to “receptacles or places for intimate things.” Some have thought that the term means “smelling bottles or perfume bottles.”…The phrase translated “tablets” may be reference to amulets or special small boxes containing items, “tablets” or scrolls, upon which sacred or intimate things were written. This conclusion would also be consistent with the fact that there developed a practice among the Jews of wearing small boxes or containers usually on the left arm and forehead secured to the body by connected leather ties….Some Jews used this as a manner of exhibiting their own greatness, wisdom, piety and devotion; while at the same time demeaning others. The practice was condemned in Matthew 23:5.…

Ear-rings….This term…stands for amulets, or superstitious ornaments, commonly gems and precious stones, or plates of gold and silver, on which magical formula were inscribed….A mention of the earrings having religious significance related to the worship of idols is made in Genesis 35:4, in which all the household of Jacob were commanded to give up all their idols.…

Rings….A signet ring or seal ring which is pressed into a soft substance to affix a seal or signet.…

Nose-jewels….This was an item similar to an earring except that it was worn in the nose.

Changeable Suits of Apparel….“Splendid or costly garments which at home are put off or not worn.”…

Mantels….A spreading garment or cloak worn over other clothing. It was like a large tunic reaching to hands and feet.…

Wimples….A spreading garment of a woman.…

Crisping-pins….“Something turned or curved, especially a conical pouch or purse.”…

Glasses….Mirrors or thin plates made of polished metal.…

Fine Linen….A wide garment made of linen, worn on a naked body, under the outer clothes.

Hoods….“A head-piece or band wound around the head of a man.”…

[Veils]. The word veil, spelled with an “e” denotes a piece of linen or other material forming part of a head-dress and worn so as to fall over the head and shoulders and down each side of the face.

Loren D. Martin, Isaiah: An Ensign to the Nations [Salt Lake City: Valiant Publications, 1982], 165-74
2 Nephi 13:24

"Hair and Baldness"

The hair, which was considered a chief point of beauty, was the object of special care. Young people wore it long; but in men this would have been regarded as a token of effeminacy (1 Cor. 11:14). Peasant girls tied their hair in a simple knot; but the fashionable Jewesses curled and plaited theirs, adorning the tresses with gold ornaments and pearls. The favourite colour was a king of auburn, to produce which the hair was either dyed or sprinkled with gold-dust.


Self-imposed baldness,....sitting on the ground,...and sackcloth...are all symbols of mourning,...mourning caused by God’s judgments on Judah and Jerusalem as well as upon the world in the last days.

Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, p. 44

2 Nephi 13:25

What makes a nation great? Power and gain is the answer we give today, the thing is to be number one in military and economic clout. They thought so in Isaiah’s day too....Where does security lie? In digging the defenses of Jerusalem you are merely digging your graves! The only true defense is the calling of the priesthood in the Temple. If you play the game of realistic power politics you can’t expect any but the usual reward.

Hugh W. Nibley, “Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Provo, Utah: Religious Instruction, BYU, January 28, 1978], 208

2 Nephi 13:26

“Sit on the ground”

Sitting on the ground was a posture which denoted deep distress. When Job’s friends came to sympathize with him, “they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great” (Job 2:13). When the Jews were in captivity, it is said, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” (Ps. 137:1). Jeremiah also alludes to the same custom in Lam. 2:10; 3:28. The same idea is represented in a more intensified form in the expressions, “wallow thyself in ashes” (Jer. 6:26), and “roll thyself in the dust” (Micah 1:10).

Most of the Roman coins which were struck in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem have on one side the figure of a woman sitting on the ground....The figure is generally represented with one hand to the head, which rests upon it inclining forward, and the other hanging over the knee, thus presenting a picture of great grief. In one instance, however, the hands are tied behind the back.